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UNDERNEATH THE BOUGH

"A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!"

UNDERNEATH THE BOUGH

A BOOK OF VERSES
BY MICHAEL FIELD

Portland, Maine
THOMAS B. MOSHER
Mdcccxcviij

This First Edition on Van Gelder paper consists of 925 copies.

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THOMAS B. MOSHER
1898

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FOR some years my work has been done for "the younger generation"—not yet knocking at the door, but awaited with welcome.

Meanwhile, readers from further England—if they will pardon my so classing them—have given me that joy of listening denied to me in my own island; and to them I offer this book of lyrics, adding such new songs as I count my sweetest to those of "The Old World Series," some of which, I have reason to hope, have won place in their hearts.

MICHAEL FIELD.

September 8th, 1898.

INVOCATION.

THEE, *Apollo, in a ring*
We encompass, carolling
Of the flowers, fruits and creatures
That thy features
Do express, and by thy side
Live their life half-deified:
Grasshoppers that round thee spring
From their mirth no minute sparing;
Hawk and griffin arrow-eyed;
Cock the gracious day declaring;
Olive that can only flourish
Where the fruiting sunbeams nourish;
Laurel that can never fade,
That in winter doth incline her
Lustrous branches to embraid
Chaplets for the lyric brow;
The white swan, that fair diviner,
Who in death a bliss descrying
Sings her sweetest notes a-dying:
These, all these, to thee we vow,
We thy nymphs who in a ring
Dance around thee, carolling.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SONGS

THE TABLE OF THE FIRST BOOK.

1. *Mortal, if thou art beloved*
2. *Once, his feet among the roses*
3. *Let us wreathe the mighty cup*
4. *O wind, thou hast thy kingdom in the trees*
5. *Death, men say, is like a sea*
6. *Ah, Eros does not always smite*
7. *Who hath ever given*
8. *Sometimes I do despatch my heart*
9. *Down the forest-path I fled*
10. *I dance and dance! Another faun*
11. *In the moony brake*
12. *Love doth never know*
13. *Love's wings are wondrous swift*
14. *If the sun our white headlands with flame*
15. *When I grow old*
16. *I felt my leaves fall free*
17. *A calm in the flitting sky*
18. *Sweeping, sighing away*
19. *Spring!*
20. *Do you see the poppies coming*
21. *On the gray dawn-track*
22. *In winter sere*
23. *Through hazels and apples*
24. *Say, if a gallant rose my bower doth scale*
25. *This rare south-rose that thou didst take*
26. *Ah me, if I grew sweet to man*
27. *Where winds abound*

THE FIRST BOOK OF SONGS.

MORTAL, if thou art beloved,
Life's offences are removed:
All the fateful things that checkt thee,
Hearten, hallow, and protect thee.
Grow'st thou mellow? What is age?
Tinct on life's illumined page,
Where the purple letters glow
Deeper, painted long ago.
What is sorrow? Comfort's prime,
Love's choice Indian summer-clime.
Sickness? Thou wilt pray it worse
For so blessed, balmy nurse.
And for death? When thou art dying
'Twill be love beside thee lying.
Death is lonesome? Oh, how brave
Shows the foot-frequented grave!
Heaven itself is but the casket
For Love's treasure, ere he ask it,
Ere with burning heart he follow,
Piercing through corruption's hollow.
If thou art beloved, oh then
Fear no grief of mortal men!

ONCE, his feet among the roses,
When the roses were all white,
Eros wreathed the faint, wan posies
Round Zeus' goblet; but, ere sipping,
'Mid the buds his ankle tripping,
Lavished half the vintage bright
On the roses, that, fresh-dripping,
Flushed the cup for heaven's lipping;
And the god's eyes felt delight
That the roses were not white.

But the sweetest of the roses,
By that fiery rain unfed,
Coyly still her bosom closes,
Still the crimson vesture misses;
Pale 'mid all the purple this is.
Love, thy burning wine-drops shed!
When her blushes make my blisses,
Glowing answer to my kisses,
In thy triumph be it said
That the roses are all red.

LET us wreathe the mighty cup,
Then with song we'll lift it up,
And, before we drain the glow
Of the juice that foams below
Flowers and cool leaves round the brim,
Let us swell the praise of him
Who is tyrant of the heart,
Cupid with his flaming dart!

Pride before his face is bowed,
Strength and heedless beauty cowed;
Underneath his fatal wings
Bend discrowned the heads of kings;
Maidens blanch beneath his eye
And its laughing mastery;
Through each land his arrows sound,
By his fetters all are bound.

O WIND, thou hast thy kingdom in the trees,
And all thy royalties
Sweep through the land to-day.
It is mid June,
And thou, with all thine instruments in tune,
Thine orchestra
Of heaving fields, and heavy, swinging fir,
Strikest a lay
That doth rehearse
Her ancient freedom to the universe.
All other sound in awe
Repeals its law;
The bird is mute, the sea
Sucks up its waves, from rain
The burthened clouds refrain,
To listen to thee in thy leafery,
Thou unconfined,
Lavish, large, soothing, refluent summer-wind!

DEATH, men say, is like a sea
That engulfs mortality,
Treacherous, dreadful, blindingly
Full of storm and terror.

Death is like the deep, warm sand
Pleasant when we come to land,
Covering up with tender hand
The wave's drifted error.

Life's a tortured, booming gurge
Winds of passion strike and urge,
And transmute to broken surge
Foam-crests of ambition.

Death's a couch of golden ground,
Warm, soft, permeable mound,
Where from even memory's sound
We shall have remission.

AH, Eros doth not always smite
With cruel, shining dart,
Whose bitter point with sudden might
Rends the unhappy heart—
Not thus forever purple-stained,
And sore with steely touch,
Else were its living fountain drained
Too oft and overmuch.
O'er it sometimes the boy will deign
Sweep the shaft's feathered end;
And friendship rises without pain
Where the white plumes descend.

WHO hath ever given
Cupid's head white hair,
Or hath put our roses
Under the snow's care?
If such a fool there be
We'll cry him God's mercie!

SOMETIMES I do despatch my heart
Among the graves to dwell apart:
On some the tablets are erased,
Some earthquake-tumbled, some defaced,
And some that have forgotten lain
A fall of tears makes green again;
And my brave heart can overtread
Her brood of hopes, her infant dead,
And pass with quickened footsteps by
The headstone of hoar memory,
Till she hath found
One swelling mound
With just her name writ and *beloved;*
From that she cannot be removed.

DOWN the forest-path I fled,
And followed a buzzing bee,
Till he clomb a foxglove red.
He filled full the nodding cup;
I stood and I laughed to see;
Then closed it and shut him up,
Till I laughed and set him free.

I DANCE and dance! Another faun
A black one, dances on the lawn.
He moves with me, and when I lift
My heels his feet directly shift:
I can't outdance him though I try;
He dances nimbler than I.
I toss my head, and so does he;
What tricks he dares to play on me!
I touch the ivy in my hair;
Ivy he has and finger there.
The spiteful thing to mock me so!
I will outdance him! Ho, ho, ho!

IN the moony brake,
When we laugh and wake,
And our dance begins,
Violets hang their chins,
Fast asleep;
While we laugh and leap.

Woodbine leaves above,
Each a tiny dove,
Roost upon the bare
Winter stems, and there
Peaceful cling;
While we shout and sing.

On the rooty earth
Ferns of April's birth,
Brown and closely furled,
Sleep like squirrels curled
Warm and still;
While we frisk our fill.

Hark! our ears have caught
Sound of breath and snort
Near our beechen tree
Mixing carelessly.
Sprites, away!
Fly as if 'twere day!

* * * *

Silence! on the ground
Set the toadstool round.
Of these mortals twain
We to talk will deign,
Grave and wise,
Till the morning rise.

Love doth never know
Why it is beloved,
And to ask were treason:
Let the wonder grow!
Were its hopes removed,
Were itself disproved
By cold reason,
In its happy season
Love would be beloved.

Love's wings are wondrous swift
When hanging feathers lift.
Why hath Love wings,
Great pinions strong of curve?
His wild desires to serve;
To swoop on the prey,
And bear it away,
Love hath wings.

Love's wings are golden soft,
When dropping from aloft.
Why hath Love wings,
Feathers of glistening fleece?
To soothe with balmy peace,
And warmth of his breath
Souls he cherisheth
Love hath wings.

Love's wings are broad of van,
Stretched for great travel's span.
Why hath Love wings,
Mail of the sea-bird's might?
From feeble hearts and slight
To lift him forlorn
To a fastness of scorn,
Love hath wings.

If the sun our white headlands with flame
Failed to greet,
Should we deem he would shroud them in shame?
Nay, blot
The sweet
Daylight not;
Heaven forgot.

If soft spring failed the flowers name by name
To entreat,
Should we fear she would harden earth's frame?
Her hot
Breath sweet
Bloweth not;
She forgot.

From my love if no gay token came,
Were it meet
To think she had slighted love's claim?
A knot
So sweet
Snappeth not;
She forgot.

If a land full of memories and fame
At the feet
Of a tyrant bowed down, should we blame?
A spot
So sweet
Sinneth not;
It forgot.

WHEN I grow old,
I would be bold
To ask of heaven this boon:
Like the thin-circled and translucent moon,
That makes intrusion
Unnoted on the morning sky,
And with soft eye
Watches the thousand, grassy flowers unfold,
I would be free,
Without confusion
Of influence cold,
To pause and see
The flush of youth in its felicity.

AN APPLE-FLOWER.

I FELT my leaves fall free,
I felt the wind and sun,
At my heart a honey-bee:
And life was done.

A CALM in the flitting sky,
And in the calm a moon,
A youngling golden:
'Mid windy shades an olden
Oak-tree whose branches croon
As the orb sails by.
Heigh ho!
Youth and age, the soft and dry,
While breezes blow.

Its crookèd arm the oak
Points upward to the moon;
A sapless member,
Which scorching of November
And levin shafts of June
In their season broke.
Heigh ho!
Age is gruff with blight and stroke,
While breezes blow.

But storm has left no trace
Upon the blithe new moon,
That westward slideth,
And on the white wind rideth:
It does not weary soon
Of the blowing race.
Heigh ho!
Youth is free and sweet of face,
While breezes blow.

WIND IN FIR TREES.

"Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud."
OTHELLO.

SWEEPING, sighing away
Over the fir-trees gray,
Sweeping, grating, sighing away!
As one that seeketh not to find
Thou ravest through the pines, O Wind;
Across the pines I hear thee rave
Sick as a madman for his grave;

And I have caught thee in the West,
Coming from thy prayer unblest,
Coming from the sun at rest,
With the tedium in thy cry
Of a breath that cannot die,
With the rancour in thy glee
Of a god who has lost his memory
In search of the things that were wont to be.

GRASS IN SPRING.

SPRING!
The light is stronger, the air is shuddering,
The sky is smiling through sun-clouds that shall be showers,
And the grass is caught imagining
Flowers.

POPPY SONG.

DO you see the poppies coming?
Do you see the poppies come?
Do you see the poppies coming,
Do you hear their seedy hum?—
Large poppies of the night
In their bands of blue and white,
Poppies fading from my sight
As they come.

DREAMS.

On the gray dawn-track
Dreams are hastening back
To the years:
That is why the air is busy,
That is why the eye grows dizzy
As the little ghosts from play
Speed away
To the mouldering years.

In winter sere,
We little men o' the hill
No longer duck and peer
Up holy daffodil,
Nor suck the egg
That the cuckoo lays,
Nor the angry leg
Of the chafer wring
Till the gray-pate sing
With his stiff amaze:
No, no, no, no!
To keep ourselves warm in row
We run—ta, la, la, lo!

A valley's end
Is steep and flat at the top,
No pathways there may wend
Across the sweet-fern crop

As dead as straw;
At the sign-post wry
All the winds see-saw,
And with chilly feet
We little ones meet
On the rim of sky.
We start, stay, go,
And down to the pool below
We run—ta, la, la, lo!

THROUGH hazels and apples
My love I led,
Where the sunshine dapples
The strawberry-bed:
Did we pluck and eat
That morn, my sweet?

And back by the alley
Our path I chose,
That we might dally
By one rare rose:
Did we smell at the heart,
And then depart?

A lover, who grapples
With love, doth live
Where roses and apples
Have naught to give:
Did I take my way
Unfed that day?

SAY, if a gallant rose my bower doth scale,
Higher and higher,
And, tho' she twine the other side the pale,
Toward me doth sigh her
Perfume, her damask mouth—
Roses will love the south—
Can I deny her?

I have a lady loves me in despite
Of bonds that tie her,
And bid her honest Corin's flame requite;
When I espy her,
Kisses are near their birth—
Love cannot live in dearth—
Say, shall I fly her?

THIS rare south rose that thou didst take
And send to me across the snows,
Bidding me wear it for thy sake—
Oh, deem me not unkind!
I cannot wear it for thy sake,
For it has opened me the wild daybreak
And scented all the wind:
In Paestum's seven-petalled rose
My thirst I slake;
Or warm my senses in a secret bower
Of inmost Persia: Beauty has such power
She cannot keep a bond; but doth decree
Love in her affluent presence free.

Ah me, if I grew sweet to man
It was but as a rose that can
No longer keep the breath that heaves
And swells among its folded leaves.

The pressing fragrance would unclose
The flower, and I became a rose,
That unimpeachable and fair
Planted an odour in the air.

No art I used men's love to draw;
I lived but by my being's law,
As roses are by heaven designed
To bring the honey to the wind.

I found there is scant sun in spring,
I found the blast a riving thing;
Yet even ruined roses can
No other than be sweet to man.

Where winds abound,
And fields are hilly,
Shy daffadilly
Looks down on the ground.

Rose cones of larch
Are just beginning;
Though oaks are spinning
No oak-leaves in March.

Spring's at the core,
The boughs are sappy:
Good to be happy
So long, long before!

THE SECOND BOOK OF SONGS

THE TABLE OF THE SECOND BOOK.

1. *Slowly we disarray*
2. *I stood to hear that bold*
3. *Others may drag at memory's fetter*
4. *Bring me life of fickle breath*
5. *Ah me, how sadder than to say farewell*
6. *Death, for all thy grasping stealth*
7. *Little Lettice is dead, they say*
8. *I would not have the wind pass by*
9. *Solitary Death, make me thy own*
10. *Come mete me out my loneliness, o wind*
11. *I by spells had been beguiled*
12. *O Love, o bitter, mortal journeying*
13. *I would not die*
14. *They buried him—ah, I have not thought—*
15. *She gathered me rue and roses*
16. *When thou to death, fond one, wouldst fain be starting*
17. *There is a fair white relic in my room*
18. *Vain Death, thou hast no staying*
19. *Winds to-day are large and free*
20. *He with the Gentle Ones is hid from sight*
21. *Thanatos, thy praise I sing*

THE SECOND BOOK OF SONGS.

SLOWLY we disarray,
Our leaves grow few,
Few on the bough, and many on the sod:
Round him no ruining autumn tempest blew;
Gathered on genial day,
He fills, fresh as Apollo's bay,
The Hand of God.

I STOOD to hear that bold
Sentence of grit and mould,
Earth to earth; they thrust
On his coffin dust;
Stones struck against his grave:
O the old days, the brave!

Just with a pebble's fall,
Grave-digger, you turn all
Bliss to bereaving;
To catch the cleaving
Of Atropa's fine shears
Would less hurt human ears.

Live senses that death dooms!
For friendship in dear rooms,
  Slow-lighting faces,
  Hand-clasps, embraces,
Ashes on ashes grind:
O poor lips left behind!

Mortality turns round
On mortals in that sound:
  Ears are for the knell
  Of a muffled bell:
Touch, for clods of earth;
Sight, for torture and dearth.

OTHERS may drag at memory's fetter,
  May turn for comfort to the vow
Of mortal breath; I hold it better
To learn if verily and how
Love knits me with the loved one now.

Others for solace, sleep-forsaken,
May muse upon the days of old;
To me it is delight to waken,
To find my Dead, to feel them fold
My heart, and for its dross give gold.

BRING me life of fickle breath,
Bring me death;
Summon every hope's alloy;
Gather round me what doth most
Love to boast
That it can our bliss deflower!
There is now no mortal power
That can feed upon my joy;
Every terror is o'erthrown:
I have found the magic stone,
For a dead heart is my own.

Henceforth is it not pure gold
To grow old?
Let the hours of parting fleet!
While to think of what befell
Is to dwell
At the mouth o' the honeycomb
Where the soul-bee hath its home,
Where the soul-bee hives its sweet.
And the heaven to come at last!
Bravely may I now forecast
Since I hold the loved one fast.

Ah me, how sadder than to say farewell
It is to meet
Dreading that Love hath lost his spell
And changed his sweet!
I would we were again to part,
With that full heart.

The hawthorn was half-bud, half-flower,
At our goodbye;
And braver to me since that hour
Are earth and sky:
My God, it were too poor a thing
To meet this spring.

Our hearts—life never would have marge
To bear their tides,
Their confluent rush! Lo, death is large
In boundary-sides;
And our great χαῖρε must be said
When I am dead.

DEATH, for all thy grasping stealth,
Thou dost convey
Lands to us of broadest wealth,
That stretch away
Where the sunshine hath no foil,
Past the verge of our dark soil,
Past the rim where clouds uncoil.

Mourners, whom thine avarice dooms,
Once given a space
In thy kingdom past the tombs,
With open face
See the smallness of our skies,
Large, until a mortal dies
And shrinks them to created size.

O the freedom, that doth spread,
When life is shown
The great countries that the dead
Have open thrown;
Where at our best leisure, we
With a spirit may walk free
From terrestrial poverty.

LITTLE Lettice is dead, they say,
The brown sweet child that rolled in the hay;
Ah, where shall we find her?
For the neighbours pass
To the pretty lass,
In a linen cere-cloth to wind her.

If her sister were set to search
The nettle-green nook beside the church,
And the way were shown her
Through the coffin-gate
To her dead playmate,
She would fly too frighted to own her.

Should she come at a noonday call,
Ah, stealthy, stealthy, with no footfall,
And no laughing chatter,
To her mother 'twere worse
Than a barren curse
That her own little wench should pat her.

Little Lettice is dead and gone!
The stream by her garden wanders on
Through the rushes wider;
She fretted to know
How its bright drops grow
On the hills, but no hand would guide her.

Little Lettice is dead and lost!
Her willow-tree boughs by storm are tossed—
  O the swimming sallows!—
  Where she crouched to find
  The nest of the wind
Like a water-fowl's in the shallows.

Little Lettice is out of sight!
The river-bed and the breeze are bright:
  Ay me, were it sinning
  To dream that she knows
  Where the soft wind rose
That her willow-branches is thinning?

Little Lettice has lost her name,
Slipt away from our praise and our blame;
  Let not love pursue her,
  But conceive her free
  Where the bright drops be
On the hills, and no longer rue her!

I WOULD not have the wind pass by
I would not have it rave,
I would not have the wind draw nigh
That whistled o'er his grave.

I would not have the rain beat round,
I would not hear the rain;
There is no comfort in the sound,
No comfort for us twain.

But I would have the snow drift high,
And to my house-roof cling,
So for a night at least we lie
Beneath one covering.

SOLITARY Death, make me thine own,
And let us wander the bare fields together;
Yea, thou and I alone,
Roving in unembittered unison forever.

I will not harry thy treasure-graves,
I do not ask at thy still hands a lover;
My heart within me craves
To travel till we twain Time's wilderness discover.

To sojourn with thee my soul was bred,
And I, the courtly sights of life refusing,
To the wide shadows fled,
And mused upon thee often as I fell a-musing.

Escaped from chaos, thy mother Night,
In her maiden breast a burthen that awed her,
By cavern waters white
Drew thee her first-born, her unfathered offspring,
toward her.

On dewy plats, near twilight dingle,
She oft, to still thee from men's sobs and curses
In thine ears a-tingle,
Pours her cool charms, her weird, reviving chaunt
rehearses.

Though mortals menace thee or elude,
And from thy confines break in swift transgression,
Thou for thyself art sued
Of me, I claim thy cloudy purlieus my possession.

To a lone freshwater, where the sea
Stirs the silver flux of the reeds and willows,
Come thou, and beckon me
To lie in the lull of the sand-sequestered billows:

Then take the life I have called my own
And to the liquid universe deliver;
Loosening my spirit's zone,
Wrap round me as thy limbs the wind, the light,
the river.

COME, mete me out my loneliness, o wind,
For I would know
How far the living who must stay behind
Are from the dead who go.

Eternal Passer-by, I feel there is
In thee a stir,
A strength to span the yawning distances
From her grave-stone to her.

I BY spells had been beguiled
To a marish country wild,
Where a lonely hearted child
Crossed me; and I felt she knew
All the way she wandered through,
Though the reeds around her blew,
And the dusk was in her rear,
As I watched her disappear
'Mid the flitting umbrage drear.

THE HALCYON.

Βάλε δὴ βάλε κηρύλος εἴην,
ὅς τ'ἐπὶ κύματος ἄνθος ἁμ'ἀλκυόνεσσι ποτῆται
νηλεγὲς ἦτορ ἔχων, ἁλιπόρφυρος ἔιαρος ὄρνις.
ALCMAN.

O LOVE, o bitter, mortal journeying
By ways that are not told!
I would not sing, no song is sweet to me
Now thou art gone:

But would, ah would I were the halcyon,
That sea-blue bird of spring,
So should I bring
Fair sister-companies of fleetest wing
To bear thee on,
Thou being old,
With an untroubled heart to carry thee
Safe o'er the ridges of the wearying sea.

I WOULD not die
To meet a goodly company;
I was ever, ever shy,
And have loved to live retired,
That I might con
Some mystery scarce pondered on.
Oh, this I have desired!

No hope to brood
Where harpers wing on wing intrude,
Or bold saints with trumpets rude;
Where four beasts from turning eyne
Watch my strange ways:
But in concealment of deep rays
May some recess be mine!

I never can,
On earth, though quite escaped from man,
Put society under ban:
Buzzing bees swing in a flower,
Gnats drum and dance,
The weasel intercepts my trance,
Birds warble through a bower.

Once Chloe graced
My suit; how fondly we embraced!
Still my arm was round her waist:
Chloe dropt her pretty head
Upon my knee,
And Love was left alone with me
Just while she slumberèd.

And once I lay
In sickness; I had swooned away,
For I wandered as at play;
It was untethered innocence:
Naught of my own
I had, the night was open thrown,
Sound wrought no more offence.

Endowed by thee,
Death, let me enter privacy,
Unmorose and fellowly
To mix, with the free pleasure
Of stars and springs
And magic, unfamiliar things,
My beauteous leisure.

THEY buried him—ah, I have not thought—
It is thirteen years ago.
Whether the years have been long or short
I shall never know:
Only my heart cries out with tears
To go to him in his grave, to go
To the long, long years.

SHE mingled me rue and roses,
And I found my bliss complete:
The roses are gone,
But the rue lives on,
The bitter that lived with the sweet.

Life will mingle you rue and roses;
The roses will fall at your feet:
But deep in the rue
That their leaves bestrew
The bitter will smell of the sweet.

WHEN thou to death, fond one, wouldst fain be starting,
I did not pray
That thou shouldst stay;
Alone I lay
And dreamed and wept and watched thee on thy way.

But now thou dost return, yea, after parting,
And me embrace,
Our souls enlace;
Ask thou no grace;
Thou shalt be aye confinèd to this place.

* * * *

Alone, alone I lie, ah, bitter smarting!
Thou to the last
Didst cling, kiss fast,
Yet art thou past
Beyond me, in the hollow of a blast.

THERE is a fair, white relic in my room:
God, how I love it!
Twine, twine
Green keys of sycamine
Round and above it,
Then lay it softly in my heart's new tomb.

Ah, mourning friends, these sullen sighs and deep
No longer breathe me!
Sing, sing
Praise of the royal thing
Death doth bequeath me,
And carve me in my memory to keep!

VAIN Death, thou hast no staying,
Thou dost not lag behind
Dear Life in thy decaying;
An instant thou dost claim
My Dahlia's frame;
But this corruption that men call thy preying
Is love that blows thee to the wind.

WINDS to-day are large and free,
Winds to-day are westerly;
From the land they seem to blow
Whence the sap begins to flow
And the dimpled light to spread,
From the country of the dead.

Ah, it is a wild, sweet land
Where the coming May is planned,
Where such influences throb
As our frosts can never rob
Of their triumph, when they bound
Through the tree and from the ground.

Great within me is my soul,
Great to journey to its goal,
To the country of the dead;
For the cornel-tips are red,
And a passion rich in strife
Drives me toward the home of life.

Oh, to keep the spring with them
Who have flushed the cornel-stem,
Who imagine at its source
All the year's delicious course,
Then express by wind and light
Something of their rapture's height!

UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

He with the Gentle Ones is hid from sight:
We may not follow. He hath dwelt with woes
So dread, he lays his confidence in those
Men shrink from, who remember and requite.
O comfort him, sweet daughters of the Night,
For fear of whom man's thought doth softly tread;
Within your grove let him be deeply led
To reconciliation and repose.

THANATOS, thy praise I sing,
Thou immortal, youthful king!
Glorious offerings I will bring;
For men say thou hast no shrine,
And I find thou art divine
As no other god: thy rage
Doth preserve the Golden Age,
What we blame is thy delay;
Cut the flowers ere they decay!

Come, we would not derogate,
Age and nipping pains we hate,
Take us at our best estate:
While the head burns with the crown,
In the battle strike us down!
At the bride-feast do not think
From thy summons we should shrink;
We would give our latest kiss
To a life still warm with bliss.

Come and take us to thy train
Of dead maidens on the plain
Where white lilies have no stain;
Take us to the youths, that thou
Lov'st to choose, of fervid brow,
Unto whom thy dreaded name
Hath been simply known as Fame:
With these unpolluted things
Be our endless revellings.

THE THIRD BOOK OF SONGS

THE TABLE OF THE THIRD BOOK.

1. *When high Zeus first peopled earth*
2. *Methinks my love to thee doth grow*
3. *Thou must not leave me*
4. *It was deep April and the morn*
5. *Apollo and the Muses taught thee not*
6. *There comes a change in her breath*
7. *A girl*
8. *Our myrtle is in flower*
9. *Have you seen the olives at set of sun*
10. *She lies asleep: I watching do not dare*
11. *O sweet, all sweet, the body as the shyer*
12. *Mine is the eddying foam and the broken current*
13. *Sweet of my poet how sweet are the eyes, the eyelids*
14. *Though I sing high and chaunt above her*
15. *Shall there ever be a morn*
16. *I love her with the seasons, with the winds*

THE THIRD BOOK OF SONGS.

WHEN high Zeus first peopled earth,
As sages say,
All were children of one birth,
Helpless nurslings. Doves and bees
Tended their soft infancies:
Hand to hand they tossed the ball,
And none smiled to see the play,
Nor stood aside
In pride
And pleasure of their youthful day.
Then all waxed gray,
Mourning in companies the winter dearth:
Whate'er they saw befall
Their neighbours, they
Felt in themselves; so lay
On life a pall.

Zeus at the confusion smiled,
And said, "From hence
Man by change must be beguiled;
Age with royalties of death,
Childhood sweeter than its breath,

Will be won, if we provide
Generation's difference."
Wisely he planned;
The tiny hand
In eld's weak palm found providence,
And each through influence
Of things beholden and not borne grew mild;
Youths by the old man's side
Their turbulence
To crystal sense
Saw clarified.

Dear, is not the story's truth
Most manifest?
Had our lives been twined, forsooth,
We had never had one heart:
By Time set a space apart,
We are bound by such close ties
None can tell of either breast
The native sigh
Who try
To learn with whom the Muse is guest.
How sovereignly I'm blest
To see and smell the rose of my own youth
In thee: how pleasant lies
My life, at rest
From dream, its hope expressed
Before mine eyes.

METHINKS my love to thee doth grow,
And this the sign:
I see the Spirit claim thee,
And do not blame thee,
Nor break intrusive on the Holy Ground
Where thou of God art found.

I watch the fire
Leap up, and do not bring
Fresh water from the spring
To keep it from up-flaming higher
Than my chilled hands require
For cherishing.

I see thy soul turn to her hidden grot,
And follow not;
Content thou shouldst prefer
To be with her,
The heavenly Muse, than ever find in me
Best company.

So brave my love is grown,
I joy to find thee sought
By some great thought;
And am content alone
To eat life's common fare,
While thou prepare
To be my royal moment's guest:
Live to the Best!

THOU must not leave me!
Though 'tis a mournful land
Through which I travel,
I will but guide thee, hand in hand,
To mysteries thou must in art unravel.
When thou a little way art gone,
Ere the grove's steep descent
Darkening can grieve thee,
Thou backward to the sweet stars shalt be sent;
While I plod on
To Acheron.

IT was deep April, and the morn
Shakspere was born;
The world was on us, pressing sore;
My Love and I took hands and swore,
Against the world, to be
Poets and lovers evermore,
To laugh and dream on Lethe's shore,
To sing to Charon in his boat,
Heartening the timid souls afloat;
Of judgment never to take heed,
But to those fast-locked souls to speed,
Who never from Apollo fled,
Who spent no hour among the dead;
Continually
With them to dwell,
Indifferent to heaven and hell.

Τοῖς μὲν ἀοιδὰς, τοῖς δ' αὖ δακρύων
Βίον ἀμβλωπὸν παρέχουσαι.

APOLLO and the Muses taught thee not
Thy mighty strain, enchantment to the mind,
Thralling the heart by spell of holy fears;
Awful thou sought'st Erinys' sacred grot;
And the Eternal Goddess, well inclined,
Hath given thee songs, for the dull life of tears.

THERE comes a change in her breath,
A change that saith
She is breathing in her sleep,
Breathing, breathing and yet so low:
O life at ebb, O life at flow,
Her life, her breath!

A GIRL,
Her soul a deep-wave pearl
Dim, lucent of all lovely mysteries;
A face flowered for heart's ease,
A brow's grace soft as seas
Seen through faint forest-trees:
A mouth, the lips apart,
Like aspen-leaflets trembling in the breeze
From her tempestuous heart.
Such: and our souls so knit,
I leave a page half-writ—
The work begun
Will be to heaven's conception done,
If she come to it.

OUR myrtle is in flower;
Behold Love's power!
The glorious stamens' crowded force unfurled,
Cirque beyond cirque
At breathing, bee-like, and harmonious work;
The rose-patched petals backward curled,
Falling away
To let fecundity have perfect play.

O flower, dear to the eyes
Of Aphrodite, rise
As she at once to bare, audacious bliss;
And bid us near
Your prodigal, delicious hemisphere,
Where thousand kisses breed the kiss
That fills the room
With languor of an acid, dark perfume!

FORSAKING.

HAVE you seen the olives at set of sun,
How their fiery maze,
That tossed him his sparkles, snatched his rays,
Becomes a region of limitless grays,
Dead, bough on bough,
For lack of the sun?
Love, this is how
Living would be if thy life were run:
Leave me not, thou!

A PRAYER.

SHE lies asleep: I, watching, do not dare
Pray for her dole or bliss:
Give the sweet face whatever, being there,
Thou needs must kiss!

SWEET-BRIAR IN ROSE.

SO sweet, all sweet,—the body as the shyer
Sweet senses, and the Spirit sweet as those;
For me the fragrance of a whole sweet-briar,
Beside the rose!

METRUM PRAXILLAE.

STREAM AND POOL.

MINE is the eddying foam and the broken current,
Thine the serene-flowing tide, the unshattered rhythm;
Light touches me on the surface with glints of sunshine,
Dives in thy bosom disclosing a mystic river:
Ruffling, the wind takes the crest of my waves resurgent,
Stretches his pinions at poise on thy even ripples:
What is my song but the tumult of chafing forces,
What is thy silence, Beloved, but enchanted music!

EYES.

SWEET of my Poet how sweet are the eyes, the eye-lids,
Open as clear to the sun as the flowers of noon-tide;
Honeyed the light they secure in their shaded amber,
Filling the sense with desire to inhale their fragrance,
Linger, and feast at their brink as at brink of roses.

POWER IN SILENCE.

I.

THOUGH I sing high, and chaunt above her,
Praising my girl,
It were not right
To reckon her the poorer lover;
She does not love me less
For her royal, jewelled speechlessness,
She is the sapphire, she the light,
The music in the pearl.

II.

Not from pert birds we learn the spring-tide
From open sky.
What speaks to us
Closer than far distances that hide
In woods, what is more dear
Than a cherry-bough, bees feeding near
In the soft, proffered blooms? Lo, I
Am fed and honoured thus.

III.

She has the star's own pulse; its throbbing
    Is a quick light.
She is a dove
My soul draws to its breast; her sobbing
    Is for the warm dark there!
In the heat of her wings I would not care
My close-housed bird should take her flight
    To magnify our love.

DAYBREAK.

SHALL there ever be a morn
    I might breathe beside her,
And yet choose to wake forlorn,
And yet choose to wake in death?
Eros, while my Love has breath
    I will breathe beside her.

CONSTANCY.

"I am pure! I am pure! I am pure!"

I LOVE her with the seasons, with the winds,
    As the stars worship, as anemones
Shudder in secret for the sun, as bees
Buzz round an open flower: in all kinds
My love is perfect, and in each she finds
Herself the goal; then why, intent to tease
And rob her delicate spirit of its ease
Hastes she to range me with inconstant minds?

If she should die, if I were left at large
On earth without her—I, on earth, the same
Quick mortal with a thousand cries, her spell
She fears would break. And I confront the charge,
As sorrowing, and as careless of my fame,
As Christ intact before the infidel.

THE FOURTH BOOK OF SONGS

THE TABLE OF THE FOURTH BOOK.

1. A *shady silence fills*
2. The *iris was yellow, the moon was pale*
3. In *winter, afternoons are short*
4. A *valley of oak-trees*
5. She *was a royal lady born*
6. Leda *was weary of her state, the crown was heavy on her head*
7. Ah, *how beautiful is youth*

THE FOURTH BOOK OF SONGS.

A SHADY silence fills,
At deep mid-eventide,
The rockless land of hills
Where two slow rivers glide.
The gnats beneath the gloom
Have failed in song,
Yet something through the combe
Comes like a sound along,
Though very far as yet,
Though no one is in sight,
Nor could a mortal set
Such alien echoes moving through the night.

'Tis not an hour to fear:
The sun is gone to bed,
The clouds from dusk are clear,
And there are overhead
But one or two large stars,
A bat or two.
Yet, hark! a jangle mars
The peaceful mountain-view,

Like the far cry of hounds
Chasing a distant prey:
The chime of yelping sounds—
Oh, will it sink, or will it swell this way?

It comes as comes the wind,
With little noise at first.
Exultantly combined,
Halloes and bays outburst
Upon that solitude
Where two streams meet:
Then in a scramble rude
Of shoulders, ears, and feet
The banhounds rush along,
And drive before their jaws
A wincing, naked throng
At flight from heated breath and thorny claws.

These are the souls that moan
Because upon their birth
God's water was not thrown;
Or those who left the earth
Impenitent, unblessed.
Now all must fly,
While summer is at rest,
And, hunted furiously,
Be caught and bitten through
By dogs of faery-breed,
Sleek creatures, ebon-blue,
With lusting teeth and fore-ordainèd speed.

They scour the mountain side,
The upland township, then
Skirt the dark valley wide,
A cloud of dogs and men:
Behind, tall ladies race,
Each dressed in green,
Each with a smile-lit face
And presence of a queen,
Who breathe from steely lips,
Clap when a soul is caught,
And urge, with corded whips,
The stragglers of the pack to fiendish sport.

Their dogs have ceased to whine;
The whining doth not cease.
One cannot watch the kine,
That chew their cud in peace;
For still the lengthy curs,
It almost seems,
Phantasmal haunt the firs,
Haunt the two voiceless streams:
The sprites themselves have ghosts
That it is hard to lay,
And echoes walk in hosts
Long after the live echoes pass away.

THE iris was yellow, the moon was pale,
In the air it was stiller than snow,
There was even light through the vale,
But a vaporous sheet
Clung about my feet,
And I dared no further go.
I had passed the pond, I could see the stile,
The path was plain for more than a mile,
Yet I dared no further go.

The iris-beds shone in my face, when, whist!
A noiseless music began to blow,
A music that moved through the mist,
That had not begun,
That would never be done,
With that music I must go:
And I found myself in the heart of the tune,
Wheeling round to the whirr of the moon,
With the sheets of mist below.

In my hands how warm were the little hands,
Strange, little hands that I did not know:
I did not think of the elvan bands,
Nor of anything
In that whirling ring—
Here a cock began to crow!
The little hands dropped that had clung so tight,
And I saw again by the pale dawnlight
The iris-heads in a row.

A BALLAD.

In winter, afternoons are short;
It was a winter afternoon.
The milking was already done;
I took my man, I took my gun,
That we might have some sport.

We stooped behind the tallest brake;
There was a bush of golden furze;
The furze has scent so rich and full
It makes the sense a little dull:
I hardly felt awake.

Oh, could it be the whirr of game,
That sudden, little spring of noise!
Robin was shouting in the wind;
He must have left me far behind,
So faint his whistle came.

I felt the bushes with my hand:
There was a certain furrowed nook—
The gorse with fire was black and brown,
But there the music drew me down
Into a clear, white land.

There was more grass than I could see,
The grass was marked with pale, green rings;
And oh, the sudden joy I felt
To see them dancing at full pelt,
The whole Fair Family.

We did not touch the pale, green rings,
I think we eddied through the air;
A swirl of dew was in my face,
And, looking downward, I could trace
The mark of pale, green rings.

The measure scarcely was begun;
I could have danced a hundred years!
But Robin, he would surely scoff—
Straightway I broke the measure off:
My eyes blinked in the sun.

If Robin should be come to harm!
I looked for him to left, to right:
In winter, afternoons are short,
It was too late to think of sport;
I turned back to the farm.

My mother all the tale should know.
How thick the trees above the hedge!
There was a pond that I must pass;
I looked in it as in a glass;
My hair was white as snow.

The servants saw me pass and smiled.
But that was not the worst, for when
I looked in at the parlour door
The children rose up from the floor:
I had no wife or child.

They gathered round me in a flock;
The mistress jeered. But who was he,

That old man with the bald, bent head?
Oh, he would know I had been dead,
He would not feel the shock.

His master was away from home,
He said, and rose to give me food;
"But my old master has been lost
These fifty years." A terror crost
His breast, and he was dumb.

I could not touch the wheaten bread,
So plain I saw the clear, white land.
O cursèd, cursèd elfin-race,
Mid living men I have no place,
And yet I am not dead.

I travel on from town to town,
But always by a dusty road,
By market-streets, by booths and fairs;
I have great terror of the snares
Upon the furzy down.

But I must see my home once more,
Nor fear to eat the wheaten bread.
Oh, some day I must see my friend,
And eat with him, and make an end,
For Robin is fourscore.

A VALLEY of oak-trees,
A streamlet between them
As twisted as these;
Few mortals have seen them,
Or crossed the low bridge
From oak-ridge to oak-ridge.
Why is there a bridge
Where no one can heed it,
Or traveller need it,
Small bridge between small oak-trees?

The Dryads have homesteads,
And cousins and neighbours:
A Dryad, who weds
With a Faun, often labours
To reach her own folk
In some far away oak;
For she loves the old folk
Of the glade where she tarried
Before she was married;
And then on the bridge she treads.

Or one, who with boldness
Is wooed by a satyr,
Her sandals will press
On the boards with the patter
Of leaves in the wind;
And looking behind,

Half-scared by the wind,
Her face coy and simple
She hides mid her wimple,
And runs in her floating dress.

Thus often and sweetly
The bridge hath united,
Hath helped those who fly,
Hath brought the invited
And sped the late guest.
From east and from west
Pass lover and guest,
While the bridge is unbroken
In the countryside oaken,
And Dryads and Fauns live by.

A BALLAD.

She was a royal lady born,
  Who loved a shepherd-lad;
To bring the smile into his face
  Was all the care she had.

His murderers brought a bloody crook
  To show her of their deed:
She eyed it with a queenly eye;
  And leapt into the mead.

And there she settled with the lambs,
  And felt their woolly fleece;
It was their cry among the hills
  That brought her to her peace.

And when at night she folded them,
  Outside the wattle-fold
She took her lute and sang to them
  To keep them from the cold.

She was a happy innocent
  Whom men had sought to spite.
Alack, no sovereign lady lives
  A life of such delight.

For no one crossed her any more,
  Or sought to bend her will;
She watched the ewes at lambing-time,
  And in the winter chill.

And when her flock was gathered far
  One day beside the brook,
The shepherds found that she had died,
  Her arms about her crook.

She had no memories to forget,
  Nor any sins to weep;
O God, that I might be like her,
  And live among the sheep!

LEDA was wearied of her state, the crown
was heavy on her head;
She put the crown away,
And ran down to the river-bed
For a whole holiday.

She came to draw free, lonely breaths beside
the mellow, autumn pools;
Counting their starry drops,
She mused on the lone god who rules
Above the mountain-tops.

And, as she worshipped him with secret heart,
among the willow-trees
She felt how something sailed
And gathered round her as a breeze:
The breath within her failed.

There were white feathers on her breast when
she awoke; the water stirred
With motion of white wings,
And in her ear that note she heard
The swan a-dying sings.

TRIUMPH OF BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

FROM LORENZO DI MEDICI.

"Quant' è bella giovinezza."

Ah, how beautiful is youth,
Youth that fleets so fast away!
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay!
This is Bacchus we are seeing,
Ariadne—how they glow!
Always happy and agreeing,
Since 'tis plain that nothing matters
While they love each other so;
And these others, nymphs and satyrs,
Dance beside them all the way:
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay.

See! these little fauns, a-bubble
With pure mischief, muse and plot
How to get the nymphs in trouble,
And a thousand traps have baited
Mid the bushes, in the grot;
Now by Bacchus' heat elated
They are skipping all the way:
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay.

And the tricksome nymphs discover
It is nice to be pursued,
Caught and worried by a lover;
Who should frown at Love's ensnaring
Were a thankless creature rude;
So they mingle, pleasure sharing,
Making gambol all the way:
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay.

On an ass Silenus hoary
Rides, with all his flesh and years,
Drunken, steeped in Bacchic glory.
At his figure's backward swaying
He is foremost in his jeers;
And at whiles, in snatches singing
With the others, cheers the way:
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay.

This is Midas: as they tell us,
All he touches turns to gold,
But his gift scarce makes us jealous;
For what good is there in treasure,
Treasure more than man can hold,
If he cannot take his pleasure,
Being thirsty all the way?
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay.

Now all ears be set a-tingle,
Open, quick to every bliss!
Young and old together mingle,
Young nor old possess the morrow,
'Tis to-day we meet and kiss;
We must drop our grief, for sorrow
Would pollute this holy way:
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay.

Youth and maiden, swell the chorus!
In our hearts how warm and sweet
Thus to feel the gods are for us,
Loving music, loving dances,
Merry with our moving feet!
Let misfortune as it chances
Strike across us on our way:
He who would be gay, forsooth,
Let him hasten to be gay.
Ah, how beautiful is youth,
Youth that fleets so fast away!

THE FIFTH BOOK OF SONGS

THE TABLE OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

1. *She fled from love, her suit was granted*
2. *A land of riotous harvest and of sweat*
3. *A nightingale wakes me. Think of this*
4. *Two lovers came; of many a common thing*
5. *We met*
6. *As two fair vessels side by side*
7. *Dost thou not hear? Amid dun, lonely hills*
8. *A train*
9. *The tips of the hills rise up, like curled*
10. *The love that breeds*
11. *Full summer and at noon; from a waste bed*
12. *Your rose is dead*
13. *Look, in the early light*
14. *There is a month between the swath and sheaf*
15. *The lady I have vowed to paint*
16. *We meet. I cannot look up; I hear*
17. *I have found her power*
18. *A branch of wild-rose buds*
19. *In a vase of gold*
20. *Lilies, are you come*
21. *They are terribly white*
22. *I live in the world for his sake*
23. *I hear thine iterating voice in flight*
24. *Gay lucidity*
25. *Stars at break of day*
26. *His ship has touched the land: what curses*
27. *Life was a rose, a rose to me*
28. *As the young phœnix, duteous to his sire*

THE FIFTH BOOK OF SONGS.

APOLLO'S TRIUMPH.

SHE fled from love, her suit was granted,
Daphne was changed into a laurel-tree.
But after, with so keen a zest she panted
To yield her sweets, and, in despair,
Cast such engrossing odours through the air,
Apollo, breathing them, had all he wanted.

VINTAGE.

A LAND of riotous harvest and of sweat,
A land where men pull down the boughs to get
Plump clusters and then ravage them, a land
Where some coarse mystery breeds that must expand;
A festival as ominous as fate,
A holiday that will not satiate,
Such laughter as must leap up to a creed;
More clusters and more crushings and more speed,
Pressure of bubbling fruit on open lips,
Squashing and spirts and juicy finger-tips!
For this sun-smothered champaign were accurst,
Should Bacchus pass, with glazing eyes, athirst.

A NIGHTINGALE wakes me. Think of this! —
  While she sings so loud,
A woman is lying in her shroud
  To whom a lover has never vowed:
O wrong in the world, and by God allowed!

Ah me, a girl to be dead, and miss
  That high-and-away, that clang of pain,
  The way Love trebles his sweets again,
  And then feels it vain,
Jar, jarra! and keeps to the mocking strain!

Two lovers came; of many a common thing
  We talked; then in a ring
Drew toward the hearth; the winter daylight died,
And she was at his side;
  He took, he stroked her hand,
    That we might know
    It is just so
Love loves, the cadence of our talk grew low,
  The fire shot forth a brand.

Then we forgot the lovers; for the room
Was filling with a doom,
The pressure of a Presence that we felt
Had power with them that dwelt
  In many a distant land
    And with the dead,
    No word we said
But in a stupor watched the firelight shed
  Glow on the fondled hand.

We met
After a year. I shall never forget
How odd it was for our eyes to meet,
For we had to repeat
In our glances the words that we had said
In days when, as our lashes lifted
Or drooped, the universe was shifted.
We had not closed with the past, then why
Did the sense come over us as a fetter
That all we did speaking eye to eye
Had been done before and so much better?
I think—but there's no saying—
What made us so hateful was the rage
Of our souls at finding ourselves a stage
Where marionettes were playing:
For a great actor once had trod
Those boards and played the god.

As two fair vessels side by side,
No bond had tied
Our floating peace;
We thought that it would never cease,
But like swan-creatures we should always glide:
And this is love
We sighed.

As two grim vessels side by side,
Through wind and tide
War grappled us,
With bond as strong as death, and thus
We drove on mortally allied:
And this is hate
We cried.

AN ÆOLIAN HARP.

Dost thou not hear? Amid dun, lonely hills
Far off a melancholy music shrills,
As for a joy that no fruition fills.

Who live in that far country of the wind?
The unclaimed hopes, the powers but half-divined,
The shy, heroic passions of mankind.

And all are young in those reverberant bands;
None marshals them, no mellow voice commands;
They whirl and eddy as the shifting sands.

There, there is ruin, and no ivy clings;
There pass the mourners for untimely things,
There breaks the stricken cry of crownless kings.

But ever and anon there spreads a boom
Of wonder through the air, arraigning doom
With ineffectual plaint as from a tomb.

A TRAIN
That traverses Europe's central plain!—
Thousands of miles through the moulded furrows
Twinkling in sunset; as night grows brown
A Power comes down,
Stretches its wings on the infinite plain,
Strains to the earth: one bows to its reign,
And prays and prays through the thousand furrows
For a heart subdued
To the heart of that infinite solitude.

A SUPPOSITION.

THE tips of the hills rise up, like curled
Waves on the verge, from Gallow Hill:
Rim on rim what a wide, round world
The man to be hanged must have looked on, till
It closed up tight in the grip of the noose.
To think that just on a day like this—
Harvest in valley, sun profuse—
Some six of one's fellows should deprive
A soul of the joy of being alive,
And watching the sun and the mountains kiss!
But what if his captors after all
Were baulked of putting their man in thrall,
And, just when they choked him, eye and breath,
Their victim were sailing out clear to death,
No longer to blink in the flashing sun,
To be in the light, in the very run,

And reach past the mountains curling rim;—
If, while the troopers were burying him,
With thought of hell and the judgment grim,
He were stretching his limbs from life's fetter-curse
To rest in the golden universe?

UNBOSOMING.

THE love that breeds
In my heart for thee!
As the iris is full, brimful of seeds,
And all that it flowered for among the reeds
Is packed in a thousand vermilion-beads
That push, and riot, and squeeze, and clip,
Till they burst the sides of the silver scrip,
And at last we see
What the bloom, with its tremulous, bowery fold
Of zephyr-petal at heart did hold:
So my breast is rent
With the burthen and strain of its great content;
For the summer of fragrance and sighs is dead,
The harvest-secret is burning red,
And I would give thee, after my kind,
The final issues of heart and mind.

FULL summer and at noon; from a waste bed
Convolvulus, musk-mallow, poppies spread
The triumph of the sunshine overhead.

Blue on refulgent ash-trees lies the heat;
It tingles on the hedge-rows; the young wheat
Sleeps, warm in golden verdure, at my feet.

The pale, sweet grasses of the hayfield blink;
The heath-moors, as the bees of honey drink,
Suck the deep bosom of the day. To think

Of all that beauty by the light defined
None shares my vision! Sharply on my mind
Presses the sorrow: fern and flower are blind.

YOUR *rose is dead*,
They said,
The Grand Mogul—for so her splendour
Exceeded, masterful, it seemed her due
By dominant male titles to commend her:
But I, her lover, knew
That myriad-coloured blackness, wrought with fire,
Was woman to the rage of my desire.
My rose was dead? She lay
Against the sulphur, lemon and blush-gray
Of younger blooms, transformed, morose,
Her shrivelling petals gathered round her close,
And where before,

Coils twisted thickest at her core
A round, black hollow: it had come to pass
Hints of tobacco, leather, brass,
Confounded, gave her texture and her colour.
I watched her, as I watched her, growing duller,
Majestic in recession
From flesh to mould.
My rose is dead—I echo the confession,
And they pass to pluck another;
While I, drawn on to vague, prodigious pleasure,
Fondle my treasure.
O sweet, let death prevail
Upon you, as your nervous outlines thicken
And totter, as your crimsons stale,
I feel fresh rhythms quicken,
Fresh music follows you. Corrupt, grow old,
Drop inwardly to ashes, smother
Your burning spices, and entoil
My senses till you sink a clod of fragrant soil!

THE DEPTHS OF THE GRASS.

Look, in the early light,
Down to the infinite
Depths at the deep grass-roots;
Where the sun shoots
In golden veins, as looking through
A clear pool one sees it do;
Where campion drifts
Its bladders, iris-brinded, through the rifts
Of rising, falling seed

That the winds lightly scour—
Down to the matted earth where over
And over again crow's-foot and clover
And pink bindweed
Dimly, steadily flower.

JULY.

THERE is a month between the swath and sheaf
When grass is gone
And corn still grassy,
When limes are massy
With hanging leaf
And pollen-coloured blooms whereon
Bees are voices we can hear,
So hugely dumb
This silent month of the attaining year.
The white-faced roses slowly disappear
From field and hedgerow, and no more flowers come:
Earth lies in strain of powers
Too terrible for flowers:
And would we know
Her burthen we must go
Forth from the vale, and, ère the sunstrokes slacken,
Stand at a moorland's edge and gaze
Across the hush and blaze
Of the clear-burning, verdant summer bracken;
For in that silver flame
Is writ July's own name—
The ineffectual, numbed sweet
Of passion at its heat.

THE lady I have vowed to paint
Has contour of a rose,
No rigid shadow of a saint
Upon the wall she throws;
Her tints so softly lie
Against the air they almost vie
With the sea's outline smooth against the sky.

To those whom damask hues beguile
Her praise I do not speak,
I find her colour in the smile
Warm on her warm, blond cheek:
Then to the eyes away
It spreads, those eyes of mystic gray
That with mirage of their own vision play.

Her hair, about her brow, burns bright,
Her tresses are the gold
That in a missal keeps the light
Solemn and pure. Behold
Her lashes' glimmerings
Have the dove's secret springs
Of amber sunshine when she spreads her wings.

We meet. I cannot look up; I hear
He hopes that the rainy fog will clear:
With a flushing cheek, I hope it may,
And at last I seek his eyes.
Oh, to greet such skies—
The delicate, violet, thunder gray,
Behind, a spirit at mortal play!
Who cares that the fog should roll away?

I have found her power!
From her roving eyes
Just a gift of blue,
That away she threw
As a girl may throw a flower.
I am weary of glances;
This blue enhances
My life: I have found her power.

ONE BRANCH.

A branch of wild-rose buds
In sunny studs
Of orange-red, flecked by the warm, diffused,
Violet flowers,
Breathing a breath transfused
As if with showers
Of the first dew that fell
When all things done were well.

IRISES.

IN a vase of gold
And scarlet, how cold
The flicker of wrinkled grays
In this iris-sheaf! My eyes fill with wonder
At the tossed, moist light, at the withered scales under
And among the uncertain sprays.

The wavings of white
On the cloudy light,
And the finger-marks of pearl;
The facets of crystal, the golden feather,
The way that the petals fold over together,
The way that the buds unfurl!

TIGER-LILIES.

LILIES, are you come!
I quail before you as your buds upswell;
It is the miracle
Of fire and sculpture in your brazen urns
That strikes me dumb,—
Fire of midsummer that burns,
And as it passes,
Flinging rich sparkles on its own clear blaze,
Wreathes with the wreathing tongues and rays,
Great tiger-lilies, of your deep-cleft masses!
It is the wonder
I am laid under
By the firm heaves
And overtumbling edges of your liberal leaves.

CYCLAMENS.

THEY are terribly white:
  There is snow on the ground,
And a moon on the snow at night;
  The sky is cut by the winter light;
Yet I, who have all these things in ken,
Am struck to the heart by the chiselled white
  Of this handful of cyclamen.

I LIVE in the world for his sake.
  For the eyes that sleep and wake,
I live in the world for his eyes:
Earth's kingdoms may pass away,
I heed not these things of clay,
But I live, I love, I pray
  From the light of his eyes.

TO A CUCKOO HEARD IN EARLY MORNING.

I HEAR thine iterating voice in flight,
  Cuckoo, while every wood-bird's song is furled.
To rise like thee! to take my range of light,
And spread unravished echoes through the world!

FEBRUARY.

GAY lucidity,
Not yet sunshine, in the air;
Tingling secrets hidden everywhere,
Each at watch for each;
Sap within the hillside beech,
Not a leaf to see.

STARS AT DAWN.

STARS at break of day
Rushing to your rhythmic play
Round the sun so far away,
Pray for me as ye dance and bound,
Skimming the sky with a lovely sound,
Pray for me, as in a ring
To the crystal light ye sing,
That the image of your glee
May at heart give peace to me!

TOUCHING THE LAND.

HIS ship has touched the land: what curses
Rise in my heart to feel him there!
His ship is sailing on to verses
Of lyric passion and of prayer.

LIFE was a rose, a rose to me
  Through which the lucid blood flowed free,
Through which the sunlight slanted:
The inner circle was a flower enchanted,
    And *that* some enemy
  Has rifled from the core;
I smell my rose no more;
The zest of the intricacy is gone,
  And the wide leaves flower on.

RENEWAL.

As the young phœnix, duteous to his sire,
  Lifts in his beak the creature he has been,
And, laying o'er the corse broad vans for screen,
Bears it to solitudes, erects a pyre,
And, soon as it is wasted by the fire,
Grides with disdainful claw the ashes clean,
Then spreading unencumbered wings serene
Mounts to the aether with renewed desire:

So joyously I lift myself above
The life I buried in hot flames to-day;
The flames themselves are dead—and I can range
Alone through the untarnished sky I love,
And trust myself, as from the grave one may,
To the enchanting miracles of change.

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